

WEEQUAHIC COMMUNITY PROJECT

Wednesday, March 9, 1960

Mayer's Commission on Group Relations meeting, under sponsorship of Weequahic Community Council, March 9, 1960.

Moderator - Dan Anthony

Place - Berkeley Savings & Loan basement,
Chancellor Avenue and Fabryan Place,
Newark.

Time - 8 P.M.

Attendance - Approximately 50-75 people.

President Jellinek called meeting to order 8:25 P.M. After minor bits of Weequahic Community Council business, Dan Anthony requested group to rearrange seats into a circle, and stated that there had been two meetings concerning stabilization in the Weequahic area. Many people were not completely oriented and at last meeting, Dr. Moreno had tossed the challenge for action back into the lap of the Mayer's Commission; this meeting was the acceptance of that challenge.

Anthony requested people to introduce themselves and asked particular people for comments about previous meetings.

Comment #1 - People present got warmed up and got to know a few other people.

Bertram Bland - Enjoyed meeting-program stimulated people to say what they thought - enjoyed it.

Al Mark - thought that a great deal of interest was created - to produce this response.

Dr. Jellinek - Enjoyed meeting but couldn't determine purpose of meeting.

Ben Epstein - Felt that people totally avoided problems at previous meetings in neighborhood. Talked in platitudes - and were afraid to talk about what the problems really were - - - .

G. Tanger - I had made up my mind that this would be my last meeting. I would not attend if the pussy-footing didn't stop. The problem exists in Clinton Hill where the schools had 90%-100% Negroes. Have to learn to recognize that there are whites and Negroes. I am thinking of an incident at Avon Ave. School where there was only one white child in the entire class of Negroes. As a result-the white child didn't get to know other whites. The Negro children didn't get to know white children --.

Talbot: - The intellectuals at both meetings did realize that a problem exists-should call the cards as they fell. The Meeker-Weesquahic-etc. councils - it was parliamentarily decided-could handle this routine-but that a group should be appointed to take care of the problems-while the councils went on doing their regular jobs.

Jake Feldman (of Social Agencies)- Very frustrated at end of first meeting. Lady conducting meeting was not honest-and that's not right-I went away not knowing what it was all about.

Larry McClosky (Member of COMM.) - At the first meeting - I had the advantage of knowing in advance that it was an experiment in Group Relations- and the good doctor did a good job of stirring us up and getting us to wonder what the hell this was all about. Had misgivings-but think it was successful- Left in the rafters after first two meetings--but this attendance proves that the experiment appears successful.

Cecil Arons:- Dr. Moreno in answer to my question at last meeting, said: "Do you think we ought to go out and get the people who weren't there

and should be here? - get small groups of five - and families." We should start in street or area where there is a problem-the whites are starting to run on Nye Ave.

Jack Trugman- First things first. What is the problem? Let us all know what the problem is so we can work out a solution. Let's get the problem down to the lowest common denominator.

* Ben Epstein - Ceil Arons stated the problem insofar as the white residents are concerned; we are starting to think of the problems of schools-crimes-etc. - that may be affected by our prejudices about Negroes--that have caused us to worry-. We welcome Negroes into the community but are ^{(worried about} living in a neighborhood which we didn't want to see turned into a Jim Crow community. We didn't mind ^{BEING} experimented with-if it helps to meet the situation properly.

Bland- We make a mistake in thinking people move only because of racial problems-many people move because of social and economic reasons. Children grow up -----.

Elderly gentleman who has lived in neighborhood for more than 30 yrs.- Many colored people keep their houses better than whites-but the colored children should learn not to run across yards- etc., - - - -.

Abe Chincy (former president Weeq. Comm. Council, active in adult education); People of Weequahic Community Council have visited and spent an hour or so together;- the problem- or attitude seemed to center about-what is this council going to do about keeping the Negroes out of this neighborhood. This statement seems to sum up the sentiment-as I heard it expressed.

Anthony- Do you (the group) think our problem for discussion is how to keep the Negroes out of Weequahic?

Targer- It's not so much keep the Negroes out-but how to keep whites from running.

_____ (don't know name): Many Weequahic residents are moving to Hillside-even though there is little change in social status --feel the move is due to ignorance and racial bias on part of 90% of those who move--.

Anthony- questioned group and a response by 10% of those present indicated that they agreed that 90% of those who move-do so because of Negroes moving in ---.

McClosky- Is it possible that Negroes are moving out because Puerto Ricans are moving in? -----.

Talbot- ----- if you want to keep Negroes out--don't sell out and move out of the section.

(Talbot continued a lengthy harangue-which included the statement that people who are running seem not to know or realize that the economic condition of Negroes has changed-and that Negroes have money-and can run too).

If you want to solve problem-don't run-but stay and help to stabilize the neighborhood and maintain the high standards you have-and want to keep---.

Mrs. T. Flagg- ----- could see what can be done about breaking down barriers in Vailsburg and Forest Hills-and other ^{NEIGH} ~~neighborhoods~~ neighborhoods which are not open to Negroes. ----- a millionaire - with a desire to practice human relations could do much to solve this situation --.

_____ (unknown) - We should know about Middletown, N. Y.-where people about to move into the community were made to go to school-and learn to scrub walls---- and learn to live in a community of all races. -----

Jake Feldman - ---- need an educational program-to teach people how to live-take care of sanitation-etc.--- keep your standards-----.

McClosky- If you have been in combat-you don't care about his color- or ^{his} background-but how well he handles his weapons--- must learn how to get along with people.

Rosenblatt(Professional worker at Y, Chancellor Ave., recently moved from Boston) - People are fleeing because they don't know about Negroes- --- people must get together on a common problem-and get to know each other by working to solve these problems.

Anthony - Are we doing more harm than good by talking about this-or should we do more about solving common problems?

Bland - We are doing well in talking frankly tonight. We should have block groups-and learn how to be good neighbors-could relate an incident of a bad neighbor who was colored and in moving his truck in driveway did damage to hedges of white neighbor. The white neighborcame to me(Bland) and asked me to tell this neighbor. The white neighbor who asked me to protest said he didn't want to complain because the fellow would think he was prejudiced. ---- We colored have faced the integration problem all our lives. -- the realities can be faced in small block groups.

Chinoy - The Meeker block group is working well together in solving their problems. What concern is this of Keer Ave.?

Bland - Keer Ave doesn't have Meeker Ave. Problems.

Chinoy- ----- how do we get rid of the mind set of people who picture Negroes as wild-having razors-etc.

Jellinek- Education seems to be the answer----but what do we mean when we say educate?

Anthony- To Ceil Arons; - it means one thing- ---says whites are running away from Nye Ave.

Epstein - I don't want to be part of any deal to keep whites in - by keeping Negroes out---. If we keep whites from moving out- we keep Negroes from moving in-and we have stabilized the neighborhood. Is this what we want?

_____ (unknown) - Should have a certain proportion of whites and Negroes -- when we rent _____. Should straighten out advertising. When we advertise interracial housing-this keeps whites out.

_____ (unknown) - Can we stop ~~saltons~~ realtors from advertising which causes a problem? -----.

Anthony - ----- can we get to realtors and have them stop the scare selling technique?

Group response indicated that 75% of group felt we should get to the realtors and correct this.

Mr. Arens - I resented the doctor who used us as guinea pigs. I'm not as frustrated anymore. But-I felt the solution should come from the professionals-not from us laymen. -- when it comes to money-you can't get them (realtors) to stop by saying please. How can we solve this problem Here-tonight-if it has existed for hundreds of years? My block, Stengel Ave. is about 50-50. I'd like to keep it that way-If we could solve this (white and Negroes) we could solve world problems.

Pauline Leshins - In my mind, the crux of the matter is the realtor. He sells the houses and shows the Negroes how to increase income --- The two family houses are being cut up so as to get higher rentals which the Negro buyer needs to pay off the property -----.

G. Targer - I am a realtor - and am not a part of the general statement made about realtors - Education is the way. I would like to see committees formed to visit people in sensitive-areas -- and let them learn first hand. (Committees to be made up of Negroes and whites---) --- ask the Mayor for a budget of about \$10,000 to make a film to show people how to live together.

Anthony - noted that Phila. had made such a film - and we could borrow it -----.

Feldman - ---- The nub of the matter is the Block Plan - We can teach people to live up to accepted standards.

Clyde Mitchell(secy. to Mayor Carlin): - ----a community to me- is a cohesive group that has common interest - goals ---- I agree that education offers a way ----think this situation can be aided by the Block Plan. I will start a Block Group on my block - even if I'm the only member ---.

I am very impressed with tonight's meeting --- I am not going to move from where I live --- I have no place to go. ----you have my vote @I will start a block movement.

Anthony stated that as a City body, the Mayor's Commission should withdraw officially-but give advice and assistance -----.

Chinoy: ----- official support should come from professionals -but the work should be done by the members of the community ----.

Aronowits: -(of Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council)----Block groups are not the panacea - there are three basic obstacles:

1. Unprincipled real estate lobby.
2. No open occupancy law; Negroes can't get into Vailsburg and Forest Hills.
3. Lack of enforcement of housing violations.

We must maintain independence of City Hall. Must see that Board of Education is aware of school problem----. Must build a fighting organization --not a group with human relations ideologies--build your program around doing something about keeping good neighbors --- .

Anthony: - Dr. Moreno threw us the ball - so we called this meeting --we will work with all of you - we will give you information about what is being done in other communities -----.

Feldman - We must do something. - - who is going to carry on ---.

Mrs. T. Flagg - Questioned Anthony about circulation of Human Relations Newsletter, published by Mayor's Commission; recommended that the Newsletter be used to greater advantage to publicize what is being done that is important in the neighborhood. - She thought the staff of Mayor's Commission should dig out this information.

Epstein - --- would like to see us get to work on a few specific problems -- we would like to see actions taken for violations of Rooming House Ordinances.

Anthony - Could we have a Committee to review the notes which Mrs. Leshins is taking -- and then pass on to City Hall -- that which should be passed through channels - to the proper authorities for action -.

Bland; - We should work with Dr. Jellinek and the Weequahic Community Council and the Mayor's Commission can assist in every way possible.

Jellinek; - Under the aegis of the Weequahic Community Council and using the Mayor's Commission as a resource group, we can work ahead; help to solve our problems.

Anthony - Asked group what they thought about this idea of working with the Weequahic Community Council and there seemed to be almost unanimous support for this recommendation.

Epstein - ----- We are brought here to talk about community problems and now it appears that we are being pressured to join the Weequahic Community Council. I feel sucked in. I resent this.

Bland & Feldman - attempted to appease Epstein by interpreting what they thought.

Jellinek - ----(also took exception to Epstein's remarks which he accepted as not in best interests of Weequahic Community Council of which he is President.)

Epstein - --- feel that an official sponsorship of program by Mayor's Commission is very important - the members of the Mayor's Commission take an oath of office to assist in this area ---- it becomes an official obligation ---- .

Bland - The Mayor's Commission should not withdraw - but should continue to work together with all the groups - As a City agency - we expect you to work with us ----.

Talbot - I wonder if you realize the wonderfulness of Dr. Ranschoff in getting you to do what has been done - - -. We tried to get Dr. Ranschoff to tell us what to do - AWE-C-. She said -we are the only ones who could solve the problem.

Remember when she said: "do you know any people who are not leaders?" --- the people who are not members - would feel antagonistic . Dr. Ranschoff did her job.

S. Convisser (NCNCR) - We are looking for citizen participation - whether it be through the Weequahic Community Council or some other agency. The best effort may be NOT through the Weequahic Community Council because in the past, they could not get jobs done through their political efforts.

Ralph Zimm - We talk about citizen effort - and yet - so few people of the neighborhood - go to meetings of the City Council - or at the City Hall. It makes no difference what you join but someone must do something - and give of themselves.

Anthony - -- We will be guided by what the group wants.

Dr. Jellinek - ---- We, as the Weequahic Community Council would be happy to sponsor another meeting of this same sort.

Anthony - ---- We will close the formal part of this meeting, and with the Committee of Volunteers review the minutes - and prepare an agenda for next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

ALEXANDER MARK,
Commissioner

Transcribed verbatim from notes taken by Al Mark, NCGR Commissioner.